

Teleconference Remarks to the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association

December 7, 1994

The President. Nice to hear your voice. Are you having a good meeting?

Lee Goldfarb. It's great, sir, and we're in the middle of it. And everybody is gung ho, waiting to do the right thing.

The President. Well, good for you. I thank you for the invitation to come down and address the banquet this evening. And I'm sorry I couldn't come, and I'm very grateful to have this brief chance to speak with you.

Let me begin by saying, on this very special day, that I and all Americans can never forget the services rendered and the sacrifices made by the members of your association. I cherish the occasions that I've had to meet with you and with other members of veterans service organizations, and especially the times that have meant the most to me are the times that we've gathered to honor your efforts in wartime. I look forward to participating in the World War II 50th anniversary commemorations next year.

It was a real honor for me, also, I want to say, to sign the National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day proclamation. I can't believe that it took us 53 years to issue the first one, but I'm very glad that we're doing it now.

One other point I wanted to make is that I really appreciate the fact that you, Lee, have sensitized me and the rest of Americans to the fact that we must always recognize the contributions not only of the naval personnel but of the non-Navy, non-Pearl Harbor people who often are slighted. And I'm glad that your association includes veterans who were stationed throughout the island of Oahu, and not just at Pearl Harbor.

All of you who survived Pearl Harbor, as I'm sure you must know, are a terrific inspiration to all Americans and a constant reminder that we must remain ever vigilant, that we must never again be unprepared. Just a few days ago, the Secretary of Defense and General Shalikashvili and I made a recommendation to beef up the defense budget in critical areas over the next 5 years to make sure that we maintain the strongest defense in the

world. And that is one of the lessons we have learned from your service and your sacrifice.

Today, let me say again, I join with all the American people in giving thanks to those who served at Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941, and to all the other veterans of World War II for the priceless liberty you have helped us to secure. I thank you for your service in wartime, and I thank you for your continued citizenship and service to our country.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:52 a.m. by telephone from the Oval Office at the White House to the association meeting in Tampa, FL. Lee Goldfarb is president of the association.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 7, 1994

Thank you, John Betchkal, Mrs. Betchkal, Reverend León. I want to thank especially our wonderful entertainers tonight: Willard Scott, who would make anybody believe in Santa Claus; Trisha Yearwood, it's wonderful to see you again; Richard Leech, you are terrific. If I had a voice like you, I would have stayed out of politics. [Laughter] And I want to say a special word of thanks and congratulations to the magnificent Aretha Franklin who was recently honored at the Kennedy Center Honors. We are glad to see all of you here tonight. Thank you. We congratulate the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys for the wonderful job that they did.

Let me say that Hillary and Chelsea and I are delighted to be back here for our second Pageant of Peace. I don't know how many of you were here last year, but it was a lot colder. And I still feel in the Christmas spirit and more comfortable doing so. I'm glad to be here tonight, and I appreciate this wonderful weather.

This year, we have a lot to be grateful for. This is the first Christmas since the beginning of the cold war when our parents can tuck all of their children into bed on Christmas Eve knowing that there are no Russian missiles with nuclear warheads pointed at them.

In holy Bethlehem and throughout the Middle East, ancient enemies are taking giant steps toward peace and reconciliation. Peace is making progress in Northern Ireland, in South Africa, in Haiti, and Eastern and Central Europe, where people are making courageous steps to escape the shackles that have bound them.

Here at home, I appreciate what Willard Scott said about prosperity coming back. And we do have the strongest economy we've had in many years, but let us never forget that many of our people are living in poverty and others are working hard in insecurity, and that as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, let us not forget His lesson that one day we will be asked whether we lived out His love in ways that treated all of our brothers and sisters as we would have treated Him, even the least of them. He taught us all to seek peace and to treat all people with love.

In this holiday season as we gather our families and often go back to the places where we grew up, this is a time to rededicate ourselves to the things which matter most, to our responsibilities, to our families, our communities, and our country.

With all of our challenges in this holiday season, we can take great comfort in knowing that when we come together and seek God's help, we can meet any challenge. At this holiday season also, my fellow Americans, let us extend our special gratitude and prayers for the men and women of our Armed Forces who protect the peace and stand sentry for our freedom. Many of them are very, very far from their families and friends; they must be close to our hearts.

Finally let me say, this wonderful evergreen Christmas tree, the "Tannenbaum" about which Aretha Franklin sang, is a symbol of the enduring values of our lives. As we light it, let it rekindle in our hearts faith and hope and love for one another.

And now I wish God's blessings on you all at this special season, and I'd like to ask Hillary and Chelsea to join me as we light the Christmas tree.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:53 p.m. on the Ellipse. In his remarks, he referred to John J. Betchkal, chairman, Pageant of Peace, and his wife, Kathleen; Rev. Luis León, pastor, St. John's

Episcopal Church; and entertainers Willard Scott, Trisha Yearwood, Richard Leech, and Aretha Franklin.

Remarks on Signing the Uruguay Round Agreements Act

December 8, 1994

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President. As usual, you did a generous and magnificent job of recognizing the contributions of all these people who made this day possible. You did, however, leave one very important person out. If you hadn't gone on television in that national debate on NAFTA and refuted the theory of the giant sucking sound—[laughter]—I'm not sure we would be here today. And we thank you for that.

I thank the Members of Congress who are here and those who are not who have been acknowledged. I thank the members of our administration. I am so proud of all of them. I want to say a special word of thanks to Secretary Espy for helping us resolve these terribly difficult agricultural issues, without which we would not have been able to get this agreement. I thank Mickey Kantor and Rufus Yerxa and John Schmidt and John Emerson, all the people who worked on our team. I thank the business community, a bipartisan group, a remarkably diverse group, for standing up and being counted and working hard on this and our other trade initiatives.

I thank the Vice President for what he said about trade. In the last 2 years we've not only had NAFTA and GATT, but we have done our outreach to Asia through the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation group. We've had two meetings of the leaders of the APEC countries now. We have reached a new agreement with Japan which I believe is a very good one, and we continue our efforts there. And this evening I am leaving for the Summit of the Americas in Miami, which Mr. McLarty and others have done so much work on to make a success.

Two days ago when I regrettably accepted his resignation, Secretary Bentsen said that history would show that the economic future of our children and grandchildren will be more secure because of the politically difficult decisions taken in the last 2 years. I